

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 8975

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MX

SUBJECT: POLITICAL VOLATILITY DURING THE INTERREGNUM

1. ON OCTOBER 9 I LUNCHEDED AT THE BANCO NACIONAL DE MEXICO WITH ALEJANDRO MEDINA MORA AND THE MEMBERS OF THE MEXICAN COMPONENT OF THE US/MEXICAN BUSINESSMEN'S COMMITTEE (COUNTERPARTS IN A WAY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS), SAVVY BUSINESSMEN VERY MUCH A PART OF THE POLITICAL ELITE HERE. THE SUCCESSION AND ITS AFTERMATH WAS STILL VERY MUCH ON THEIR MINDS. THEY GAVE A BY-NOW FAMILIAR ANALYSIS OF THE PRESIDENT'S REASONS FOR CHOOSING LOPEZ, BUT DRAW FROM THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES A CONCLUSION I HAD NOT HEARD BEFORE;

2. IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS INTERREGNUMS, THEY BELIEVED THAT THIS NEXT FOURTEENTH MONTH PERIOD BEFORE LOPEZ PORTILLO IS ELECTED AND INAUGURATED COULD BE A POLITICALLY DELICATE AND "EVEN DANGEROUS PERIOD." ALTHOUGH THEY DECLINED TO ELABORATE EXPLICITLY ON THE MORE EXTREME CHARACTERIZATION, THEY CITED SEVERAL REASONS FOR THE POTENTIAL VOLATILITY OF THIS PERIOD:

A. LOPEZ' PRESENT DEPENDENCE UPON THE PRESIDENT, GIVEN HIS DEBT FOR HIS SELECTION AND HIS OWN LACK OF POLITICAL POWER BASE;

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B. THE PRESIDENT'S TEMPERAMENTAL DIFFICULTY IN LETTING GO THE POWER HE HAS (THEY INTERPRET THE NAMING OF THREE CABINET MINISTERS TO THE PRI AS AN ECHEVERRIA ATTEMPT TO KEEP INFLUENCE OVER LOPEZ--SEE MEXICO 8836);

C. LOPEZ' DESIRE (INDEED NECESSITY) TO ESTABLISH HIS OWN IMAGE SEPARATE FROM THE PRESIDENT; AND

D. THE PRESIDENT'S LIMITLESS AMBITION TO LEAVE HIS MARK ON MEXICAN HISTORY (THEY THINK HE COULD BE TAMPTED TO MAKE SOME ILL-CONSIDERED, DRAMATIC ACTION, E.G., LEFTIST ORIENTED LAWS OR DECREES, ANTI-U.S. ATTITUDES, ETC., LEAVING LOPEZ TO PICK UP THE PIECES);

3. IN ESSENCE, THEY SEE THIS PERIOD AS A DIFFICULT ONE FOR THE PRESIDENT PSYCHOLOGICALLY AND THEREFORE A POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT ONE FOR LOPEZ POLITICALLY. THE PRESIDENT, THEY FEEL, IS CAPABLE OF IRRATIONAL ACTION (E.G., SPAIN) AND LOPEZ IS NOT YET (AS GOVERNMENT SECRETARY MOYA PALENCIA MIGHT HAVE BEEN) HIS OWN MAN, AND THUS CANNOT PREVENT SUCH ACTIONS.

4. COMMENT: THESE POINTS OF VIEW HAVE SOME MERIT AND WHILE THE MORE OMINOUS OVERTONES (INCLUDING IMPLICATIONS THAT LOPEZ PORTILLO MIGHT NOT REACH THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN SUCCESSFULLY--OR AT ALL--IF HE STEPS OUT OF LINE) STRIKE ME AS A BIT EXTREME, I THINK WE SHOULD REMAIN VERY SENSITIVE TO THE MEXICAN POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AS WE GO THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF A RATHER UNIQUE SITUATION.
JOVA

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